

How long do drugs stay in your system?

Drugs affect people in different ways and the time it takes an individual to excrete drugs can depend on a number of factors, these include:

- Metabolism
- Body mass
- Hydration
- Amount and frequency of drug use

As a guide, here are some estimated times it would take for a number of illicit drugs to leave the body, although the time depends on the type of testing used (e.g., hair testing can identify drugs that were taken months before). The times provided below are for urine tests, the most likely form of drug test to be used:

- **Amphetamines** – 2-4 days
- **Cocaine** – 2-4 days
- **Ecstasy** – 2-5 days
- **LSD** – 1-4 days

Cannabis is unique in that it is stored in the fatty tissues and released slowly into your bloodstream before you get rid of it from your body.

- **Cannabis (occasional use)** – 1-5 days
- **Cannabis (regular, long-term use)** – up to 6 weeks

As well as the possible impact that drugs can have on work performance or driving skills, they are also tested for because they are illegal. It is important to remember that if you are found with illicit drugs in your possession you could face fines and/or a prison sentence, as well as a possible criminal record.

What types of drug testing are there?

There are two major types of drug testing as far as illicit drugs are concerned – workplace drug testing and roadside drug testing. Alcohol is tested for in random breath testing (RBT).

The rationale for workplace drug testing is that drug use impairs work performance (e.g. lowers productivity and increases accident risk) and employers need to do their best to reduce such risk. Drug testing is proposed as a way of preventing use and detecting impairment.

Roadside drug testing has been developed to deter those who have recently taken or used illicit drugs from driving. It is a saliva test and if the driver is found to have the presence of an illicit drug in their system they will receive a fine and possibly lose their licence (the penalties are different in each Australian state and territory).

How do they test for drugs?

Whether or not a person has used drugs can be measured in a number of ways (e.g. blood, hair, urine and breath analysis). Breath testing is usually used to assess alcohol use. Urine testing is the more common test for other drugs, although a saliva test is used in roadside drug testing (with a blood test being needed to confirm the presence of a drug should a positive test be identified).

Usually urine tests measure the presence of drug 'metabolites', not the actual drugs themselves. Metabolites of some drugs can be detected several days after exposure. For example, amphetamines may be detected one or two days after exposure, while cannabis may be detected weeks after exposure.

Legal Disclaimer

The information provided on this fact sheet is provided for information purposes only. As such it **cannot substitute for the advice of a legal professional**

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How long do different drugs stay in your system?

Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to determine how long a particular drug will stay in your system. Drugs affect people in different ways and the time it takes an individual to excrete drug metabolites can depend on a number of factors, these include:

- **Metabolism** – a fast metabolism means your body uses up things quickly – including food, water, and any drugs that you put into it. The slower your metabolism, the longer a drug might stay in your system. Unfortunately there is no way of accurately knowing what type of metabolism you have
- **Body mass** – an overweight person with more body fat may find it more difficult to excrete drugs (as the drug could linger in the fatty tissue), whilst a slimmer person with less body fat (and possibly a faster metabolism) may be able to get rid of the substances faster. Although there is science to support this, there are no guarantees that someone with a lower body mass is more likely to pass a drug test than a fatter person
- **Hydration** – drinking lots of water is often promoted as a way of avoiding a positive drug test (although most urine tests check for ‘dilution’ of the specimen). In some cases it may have an effect to some degree in as much as it can cause less concentrated urine but it does not necessarily ‘flush’ the system of the drugs
- **Amount and frequency of drug use** – this is most probably the most important factor to consider, particularly in regards to cannabis. A one-time use of a drug might clear your system quickly, but using drugs on a regular basis can lead to the drug staying in your body for longer. The amount you take, over what period of time can also be a factor

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- **LSD** – **1-4 days**

Cannabis is unique in that it is stored in the fatty tissues and released slowly into your bloodstream before you get rid of it from your body. The length of time it stays in your system depends on many things, but in general it may be found in urine for 1-5 days after occasional use and up to six weeks if you're a regular, long-term user.